

Correspondents' Correspondence

BRIEF TAKEOUTS OF MORE THAN
PERSONAL INTEREST FROM LETTERS
AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS
RECEIVED BY THE EDITORS.

PLO Terror

JERUSALEM—The funeral took place just beyond the walls of the Old City. Abdul Jankho's sons, in a gesture of mourning and rage, threw 21 bullets onto the corpse of their father. "These are the ones that didn't get you," cried one of them. Another, delirious, had to be restrained by the crowd from embracing the body. In attendance was a man I recognized and made a mental note to speak to at the earliest possible date; he, too, might not be around much longer.

Since Anwar Sadat visited here last November, the Palestinian-populated West Bank has witnessed three assassinations, one abortive attempt, and death threats to dozens of local citizens. The source of the terror is the Lebanese-based Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), whose political fortunes are currently on the wane. The motive is to dissuade moderate Arabs in the area from openly supporting the Egyptian President's peace initiative—just as the PLO slaughter of 32 Israelis on March 11 sought to undermine any movement toward an Arab-Israeli settlement.

West Bank threats are generally

mailed or broadcast over PLO radio, but not always. Thus a widely circulated article in the Qatar newspaper, *Al-Arab*, informed the region's residents that 34 of their number had been judged guilty of collaboration with Israel and sentenced to death *in absentia*. A few days later the paper reported that PLO head Yasir Arafat had issued a reprieve upon learning that some of the accused had desisted, prompting a Palestinian journalist I know to speculate that the two stories had no basis in fact. They were probably planted, he said, as part of the PLO's psychological campaign to keep West Bank inhabitants in line.

As for the three men actually murdered, public reaction would have been much stronger if the victims did not have so many personal enemies. Abdul Jankho, for example, had killed (in self defense, a court ruled) a man from a refugee camp outside Ramallah. Members of the aggrieved family, known to want revenge, may have been among his executioners.

The man I noticed at Jankho's funeral who is also in danger, although his murder would presumably be met with less equanimity, is Hussein Shyokhi. A 38-year-old lawyer, he made a much-publicized call last summer for

the PLO to democratize its structure and put an immediate halt to all forms of violence. In December, he led a West Bank delegation to Cairo to express support for Sadat. Not surprisingly, he has been attacked on PLO radio, and has received scores of death threats.

Yet Shyokhi cannot credibly be accused of collaboration, because he defends captured PLO guerillas in Israeli military courts. He further explained to me in his small book-lined office in Hebron that he is involved in no vendettas. Still, two burly younger brothers were in the room where we spoke; a third brother stood lookout from a shop across the street. Someone else watches his car, and guards are posted at his home throughout the night. There are, moreover, 100 males between the ages 18-36 in his *hamula* (extended family), and Shyokhi knowingly suggests they would not sit on their hands were he assassinated—a possibility he does not rule out: "I know my people," he says. "They are children with guns."

The lawyer is not alone in refusing to be intimidated by the PLO. He handed me a mimeographed declaration that came in the mail that day from a previously unheard of group calling itself the Palestinian Front. The document was a warning to the PLO that if bloodshed continued, countermeasures would be taken. It admonished as well against a repeat of the events of 1936-39, which began as an armed Palestinian struggle directed at the British and Jews but ended as an internecine massacre. Who comprises the Front is a mystery.

Meanwhile, Israeli security forces have considerably stepped up their presence on the West Bank to protect the populace and root out the killers. They face a difficult task, however, for the PLO is by now deeply entrenched in the area (over the past few months 12 PLO cells have been uncovered, totalling 80 persons), and among fellow Palestinians as elsewhere it seems determined to carry out a new wave of terror.—MICHAEL TANNENBAUM